

BOOK REVIEW

PAUL MARTIN, DAVID YETMAN, MARK FISHBEIN, PHIL JENKINS, THOMAS VAN DEVENDER, and REBECCA WILSON (eds.). 1998. **Gentry's Rio Mayo Plants: The Tropical Deciduous Forest & Environs of Northwest Mexico**. (ISBN 0-8165-1726-6 hbk.). University of Arizona Press, 330 S. Toole Ave., Suite 200, Tucson, AZ, 85701-1814. (Orders: www.uapress.arizona.edu, 520-621-1441, 520-621-8899 fax). \$75.00, 558 pp, 2 maps, photos, index, 7" × 10".

The interface of Neotropical and Sonoran Desert ecozones has been a region of great interest to botanists and biologists. Howard Scott Gentry was drawn to it over 60 years ago, specifically the Río Mayo region of northwestern Mexico and in 1942 he published the first version of this text. This new version of the classic text updates and amends major portions of the original and more than doubles the original list of taxa. This was undertaken with the help and support of Gentry until his death in 1993. Gentry also authored a number of books on *Agave*'s in continental North America, Sonora, and Baja, California during his lifetime. The list of almost 3,000 taxa is accompanied by a new historical background, a review of geography and vegetation, changes to land and rivers as a result of agricultural development and lumbering, and an emphasis on local knowledge and use of plants.

The book is divided into four parts, covering: the Río Mayo at the end of the twentieth century, a list of Río Mayo localities, excerpts from the original, and an annotated list of Río Mayo vascular plants. Part one offers an overview of the region and a contemporary overlook of the regional vegetation. Part two is a list of localities and an explanation of the list. Part three covers geography (rivers, mountains, climate, etc) and vegetation (forests, plant habitats, successions in disturbed areas). Part four is the annotated plant list (345 pages) preceded by an explanation of the format.

For each plant - names, local distributions, habitat, descriptive information, and indigenous uses are provided. There are no English common names included in this list, but some plants have the local Río Mayo name. I have two comments concerning this editorial decision: 1. the local names are not consistent enough to justify their existence and 2. *why leave out the English common names?!?* Recognized as medicinals in several parts of Latin America, the taxa *Sonchus asper* (L.) Hill and *Sonchus oleraceus* L. are listed without a Río Mayo name, I found this surprising. Three to five local participants could probably accomplish this by spending a few afternoons in a local herbarium recording local names. The common names in English *plus* Río Mayo names would offer an interesting linguistic perspective and possibly open the book up to a wider audience. Indeed, Latin names are of a lesser salience to most lay readers. The *Plants in Use* section in part three should be pleasing to those interested in the regional economic botany. Included in this section are lists of cultivated plants and wild plants, the latter including an annotated checklist of useful fruits, seeds, roots and herbage, and construction, fuel, and miscellaneous uses.

These sections are followed by Gentry's bibliography, literature cited, and an index. There are two maps included, one being a large removable b/w map from the back cover. This is a pleasing feature of the book, emphasizing its overall utility and usefulness. However, the press page accompanying the review copy we received here at BRIT advertises a removable *color* map. This same advertisement appears on the press web site: www.uapress.arizona.edu/books/bid1204.htm. A color map would be a great addition, whether designed to emphasize biodiversity or biogeography, and also help justify the price.

Overall, this is a beautiful book. It is well designed, academically and aesthetically. Moreover, this is a major contribution to our botanical and biogeographical literature. The authors should be commended for their efforts. Everyone interested in the botany, biogeography, conservation, and ethnobotany of northwest Mexico should find this book useful.—Kevin D. Janni, *Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A., kjanni@brit.org*.